

He walked in the feeldes, for to pry
Upon the sterres, what ther sholde bifalle;
Til he was in a marlepit yfalle;
He saugh nat that. But yet, by Seint Thomas,
Me reweth soore of hende Nicholas;
He shal be rated of his studying,
If that I may, by Ihesus, hevene kyng!
Get me a staf, that I may underspore,
Whil that thou, Robyn, hevest of the dore;
He shal out of his studying, as I gesse.
And to the chambre dore he gan hym dresse.
His knave was a strong carl for the nones,
And by the haspe he haaf it of atones,
Into the floore the dore fil anon.
This Nicholas sat ay as stille as stoon,
And ever gaped upward into the air.
This carpenter wende he were in despeir,
And hente hym by the sholdres myghtily
And shook hym harde, and cride spitously,
What, Nicholas! what how! what! looke adoun!
Awake! and thenk on Cristes passiou!
I crouche thee from clves and fro wightes,
Therwith the nyghtspel seyde he anonrightes,
On foure halves of the hous aboute,
And on the thresshold of the dore withoute:
Ihesu Crist and Seint Benedight,
Blesse this hous from every wikked wight,
for nyghtes verie the white Pater noster.
Where wentestow, Seint Petres soster?
And atte laste this hende Nicholas
Gan for to sike soore, and seyde, Alas!
Shal al this world be lost eftsoones now?
This carpenter answerde, What seystow?
What? thynk on God, as we doon, men that
swynke.
This Nicholas answerde, fecche me drynke;
And after wol I speke in pryvete
Of certeyn thyng that toucheth me and thee;
I wol telle it noon oother man, certeyn.
This carpenter goth down, and comth ageyn,
And broghte of myghty ale a large quart;
And whan that ech of hem had dronke his
part,
This Nicholas his dore faste shette
And doun the carpenter by hym he sette.
He seyde, John, myn hooste lief and deere,
Thou shalt upon thy trouthe swere me heere
That to no wight thou shalt this conseil wryte,
for it is Cristes conseil that I seye;
And if thou telle it man thou art forlore,
for this vengeance thou shalt han therfore
That if thou wryte me, thou shalt be wood.
Nay, Crist forbode it, for his booly blood!
Quod tho this sely man, I nam no labbe,
Ne, though I seye, I am nat lief to gabbe;
Sei what thou wolt, I shal it nevere telle
To child ne wyf, by hym that harwed helle!
Now, John, quod Nicholas, I wol nat lye;
I have yfounde in myn astrologye,
As I have looked in the moone bright,
That now, a Monday next, at quarter nyght,
Shal falle a reyn, and that so wilde and wood,
That half so greet was nevere Noes flood.

This world, he seyde, in lasse than an hour
Shal al be dreyn, so hidous is the shour;
Thus schal mankynde drenche, and lese hir lyf.
This carpenter answerde, Alas, my wyf!
And shal she drenche? Alas! myn Alisoun!
for sorwe of this he fil almost adoun,
And seyde, Is ther no remedie in this cas?
Why, yis, for Gode, quod hende Nicholas,
If thou wolt werken aftir loore and reed;
Thou mayst nat werken after thyn owene heed,
for thus seith Salomoun, that was ful trewe,
Werk al by conseil, and thou shalt nat rewe;
And if thou werken wolt by good conseil,
I undertake, withouten mast and seyl,
Yet shal I save hire and thee and me.
Hastow nat herd how saved was Noe,
Whan that our Lord hadde warned hym bifore
That al the world with water sholde be torn?
Yis, quod this carpenter, ful yooore ago.
Hastow nat herd, quod Nicholas, also
The sorwe of Noe with his felaweshipe
Er that he myghte brynge his wyf to shipe?
Hym hadde levere, I dar wel undertake,
At thilke tyme, than alle his wetheres blake,
That she hadde had a shipe hirself alone.
And therfore, woostow what is best to doone?
This asketh haste, and of an hastif thyng
Men may nat preche or maken taryng.
Anon go gete us faste into this in
A knedyng trogh, or ellis a hymelyn,
for ech of us, but loke that they be large,
In whiche we mowe swymme as in a barge,
And han therinne vitaille suffisant
But for a day; fy on the remenant,
The water shal aslake and goon away
Aboute pryme upon the nexte day.
But Robyn may nat wite of this, thy knave,
Ne eek thy mayde Gille I may nat save;
Axe nat why, for though thou aske me,
I wol nat tellen Goddes pryvete;
Suffiseth thee, but if thy wittes madde,
To han as greet a grace as Noe hadde.
Thy wyf shal I wel save, out of doute.
Go now thy wey and speed thee heeraboute.
But whan thou hast for hire and thee and me
Ygeten us thise knedyng/tubbes thre,
Thanne shaltow hange hem in the roof ful hie,
That no man of oure purveiaunce spyce,
And whan thou thus hast doon as I have seyde,
And hast oure vitaille faire in hem yleyd,
And eek an ax, to smyte the corde atwo
Whan that the water comth, that we may go,
And broke an hole an heigh, upon the gable,
Unto the gardynward, over the stable,
That we may frely passen forth oure way
Whan that the grete shour is goon away.
Thanne shaltow swymme as myrie, I undertake,
As dooth the white doke after hire drake;
Thanne wol I clepe, how Alisoun! how John!
Be myrie, for the flood wol passe anon.
And thou wolt seyn, Hayl, maister Nicholas!
Good morwe, I se thee wel, for it is day!
And thanne shul we be lordes al oure lyf

Of al the world, as Noe and his wyf.
But of o thyng I warne thee ful right,
Be welayssed on that ilke nyght
That we ben entred into shippes bord,
That noon of us ne speke nat a word,
Ne clepe, ne crie, but been in his preyere;
for it is Goddes owene heeste deere.
Thy wyf and thou moote hange fer atwynne,
for that bitwixe yow shal be no synne,
Na moore in looking than ther shal in deede;
This ordinance is seyde; so God thee speede.
Tomorwe at nyght, whan folk ben alle aslepe,
Into our knedyng/tubbes wol we crepe,
And sitten there, abidyng Goddes grace.
Go now thy wey, I have no lenger space
To make of this no lenger sermonyng,
Men seyn thus, Sende the wise and sey no thyng;
Thou art so wys, it needeth thee nat teche,
Go, save oure lyf, and that I the biseche.
This sely carpenter goth forth his wey;
ful ofte he seith Alas, and Weylawey,
And to his wyf he tolde his pryvete,
And she was war, and knew it bet than he,
What al this quynte cast was for to seye.
But natheles she ferde as she wolde deye,
And seyde, Alas! go forth thy wey anon,
Help us to scape, or we ben lost echon!
I am thy trewe, verray, wedded wyf,
Go, deere spouse, and help to save oure lyf!
Of which a greet thyng is affeccoun!
Men may dyen of ymaginacion,
So depe may impressioun be take.
This sely carpenter bigynneth quake;
hym thynketh verrailly that he may see,
Noes flood, come walwyng as the see,
To drenchen Alisoun, his hony deere.
He wepeth, weyleth, maketh sory cheere;
he siketh, with ful many a sory swogh;
he gooth and geteth hym a knedyng trogh,
And after that a tubbe and a hymelyn,
And pryvely he sente hem to his in,
And heng hem in the roof in pryvete.
His owene hand he made laddres thre,
To clymben by the ronges and the stalkes,
Into the tubbes, hangyng in the balces;
And hem vitailleth, bothe trogh and tubbe,
With breed and chese and good ale in a jubbe,
Suffisyng right ynogh as for a day.
But er that he hadde maad al this array,
He sente his knave, and eek his wenche also,
Upon his nede to London for to go;
And on the Monday, whan it drow to nyght,
he shette his dore withoute candel/lyght,
And dresseth alle thyng as it shal be;
And shortly, up they clomben alle thre;
They sitten stille, wel a furlong way.
Now, Pater noster, clom! seyde Nicholas;
And clom, quod John, and clom, seyde
Alisoun.
This carpenter seyde his devocioun,
And stille he sit and biddeth his preyere,
Awaityng on the reyn, if he it heere.
The dede sleepe for very bisynesse

fil on this carpenter, right as I gesse
Aboute corfew/tyme, or litel moore;
for travaille of his goost he groneth soore,
And eft he routeth, for his heed myslay.
Doun of the laddre stalketh Nicholas,
And Alisoun, ful softe adoun she spedde;
Withouten wordes mo they goon to bedde
Ther as the carpenter is wont to lye.
Ther was the revel and the melodye;
And thus lith Alisoun and Nicholas,
In bisynesse of myrthe and of solas,
Til that the belle of laudes gan to ryng,
And freres in the chauncel gonne synge.
This parissch clerk, this amorous Absolon,
That is for love alwey so wobigon,
Upon the Monday was at Oseneye
With compaignye, hym to disporte and pleye,
And axed upon cas a cloisterer
ful prively after John the carpenter.
And he drough hym apart out of the chirche,
And seyde, I noot, I saugh hym heere nat wirche
Syn Saturday; I trow that he be went
for tymber, ther our abbot hath hym sent;
for he is wont for tymber for to go,
And dwellen at the grange a day or two;
Or elles he is at his hous, certeyn;
Where that he be, I kan nat soothly seyn.
This Absolon ful joly was and light,
And thoghte, Now is tyme to wake al
nyght,
for sikirly I saugh him nat stiryng
Aboute his dore syn day bigan to spryng.
So moot I thryve, I shal, at cokkes crowe
ful pryvely knokken at his wyndowe
That stant ful lowe upon his boures wal.
To Alisoun now wol I tellen al
My love/longyng, for yet I shal nat mysse
That at the leste wey I shal hire kisse.
Som maner confort shal I have, parfay.
My mouth hath icched al this longe day;
That is a signe of kysyng atte leste.
Al nyghte me mette eek, I was at a feeste;
Therfore I wol goon slepe an houre or tweye,
And al the nyght thanne wol I wake and pleye.
Whan that the firste cok hath crowe, anon
Arist this joly lover Absolon,
And hym arraieth gay, at poynt/devys;
But first he cheweth greyn and lycorys,
To smellen sweete, er he hadde kembd his heer.
Under his tonge a trewe/love he beer,
for therby wende he to ben gracious.
He rometh to the carpenteres hous,
And stille he stant under the shot/wyndowe,
Unto his brist it raughte, it was so lowe;
And softe he knokketh with a semy/soun:
What do ye, hony/comb, sweete Alisoun,
My faire bryd, my sweete cynamome?
Awaketh, lemman myn, and spekethe to me.
Wel litel thynken ye upon my wo,
That for youre love I swete ther I go,
No wonder is, thogh that I swelte and swete,
I moore as dooth a lamb after the tete;
Ywis, lemman, I have swich love/longyng,